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# St Jude's Church of England Schools Federation

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

*This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils  
and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.*

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## **Commitment to Attendance**

The staff of St Jude's Infants and Juniors are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, children, governors and the Local Authority, to building a schools which serves the community and of which the community is proud. The two schools work together to bring consistency to their attendance policies.

St Jude's C of E Junior School expects that pupils will attend 100% of the time, unless absence is authorised by the Headteacher. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. We are committed to encouraging and supporting parents in ensuring their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

## **Parent Responsibility and the Law**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act. Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

## **Registers**

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

## **Categorisation of Absence**

Any child who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

### **1. Unauthorised absence**

This is for those children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.

### **2. Authorised absence**

This is for those children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

### **3. Approved educational activity**

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Most types of dual registration

## **Registration & Lateness**

Punctuality to school registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is one of the most important periods in the day. Lateness to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Morning registration takes place at 8.50am. The registers will remain open until 9.15am. Any child who arrives after the register has been taken but within this period, will be marked present but with an L mark. Any child arriving after 9.15am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation. The afternoon registration will be taken at 1.10pm.

Lateness by a pupil will be dealt with by the school in the first instance and may later be referred to Surrey County Council's Inclusion Officer if there is no improvement.

## **Escalation Process**

If a child is absent for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school before 9.30am on the day of absence. However, if the child is absent and no reason has been provided the following procedure will apply:

### **First and Second Day Absence**

If the school has not been notified, the parent will be telephoned to request the reason for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised as determined by the school. A message will be left where no contact can be made.

### **Third Day Absence**

The school will telephone the parent to request the reason for absence. The school will note any reason given for absence and will categorise it as authorised or unauthorised. If no response is received by the school further contact may be made by the school by other means (e.g. letter/ email/ personal call/truancy patrol)

### **Ten Days Absence**

Any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Inclusion Officer. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Where a child is absent from school the following procedure will be followed for welcoming them back. If they have been off for up to 5 days, the class teacher will welcome them back and check that they are OK. For longer term absences a more formal reintegration may need to take place involving the class teacher and Headteacher/Deputy if deemed appropriate, with a plan to catch up if possible work that has been missed.

### **Removing a child from the school roll**

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and local authority have failed, after making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

## **Frequent Absence**

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is unhelpful to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Our Inclusion Officer meets with the Headteacher on a half termly basis to discuss attendance concerns.

In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/s by:

1. Phone call to parent by Headteacher/Deputy Head and issues discussed with the child within school.
2. Letter sent to parents stating concerns about attendance, inviting them into school to meet to discuss the issues.
3. Meeting at school with Headteacher and class teacher.

If this does not resolve the attendance issues, the school will refer to the Inclusion Officer.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' if their attendance falls below 90% across the school year for whatever reason (as defined by the DfE). Absence at this level is considerably damaging to a child's educational prospects and parents' fullest support and co-operation is needed to tackle this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

Parents will be notified by a letter if their child becomes a persistent absentee and be invited to a meeting where a plan will be drawn up to address the issues identified.

### **Failure to ensure regular school attendance**

The Inclusion Officer may also issue a Penalty Notice to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Inclusion Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

### **Exceptional Leave of Absence**

***There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.***

Any savings that you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. It is widely known that the link between a child's attendance and attainment is irrefutable. The average hourly income of graduates is more than double of those young people who leave school with no qualifications.

***School will only authorise leave of absence in term time in extremely exceptional circumstances (e.g. immediate family bereavement).***

Where a parent wishes to request a leave of absence, a formal request must be made, in writing, to the Headteacher who will consider the application on behalf of the Governors.

If an unauthorised leave of absence is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the Inclusion Officer may be notified.

### **Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absences**

- In line with the guidance from the DfE, a Penalty Notice may be issued for any absence during KS2 Assessment week (Year 6) as these are statutory national tests.
- The Headteacher or other authorised person will request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents, when students are taken out of school for 5 (10 sessions) or more days' leave of absence **without** school authorisation.
- Where a child has an unauthorised leave of absence during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the Headteacher, **each parent/carer** is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.

- The amount payable per child on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 per parent/carer if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 per parent/carer if paid within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

## **Truancy Patrol**

When a child comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, their pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter will be sent to the parents/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 schooldays, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued. Again, the Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

## **The Inclusion Officer**

The Inclusion Officer (IO) monitors the attendance of all children on a half termly basis. The IO will work with school staff and parents to promote good attendance and investigate reasons for absence.

If attendance problems cannot be resolved by school then the school will make a referral to the Inclusion Officer. The IO will try to resolve the situation but, if attempts to improve attendance have failed or unauthorised absence persists, the IO can use sanctions such as parenting contracts, penalty notices and prosecution.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2,500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

*All staff are expected to:*

- Keep a register of attendance and raise attendance concerns with the Headteacher
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Provide pastoral support to address attendance issues.

*The Headteacher will:*

- Promote the attendance policy within the school and ensure that it is implemented effectively.
- Monitor and review attendance procedures and work with office staff to ensure reasons for absence are identified and interventions are put in place if required.
- Work with families to resolve attendance issues.
- Meet with the IO on a termly basis to identify and action any attendance support.
- Identify and monitor attendance of PA children.

*School office staff responsible for attendance will:*

- Ensure morning and afternoon registers are taken and are up to date.
- Contact parents and request reasons for absence.
- Collate daily attendance records and, together with the Headteacher, put in place agreed procedures to monitor and respond to poor attendance and punctuality.

*The Governing Body will:*

- Monitor and review the attendance policy on an annual basis.
- Agree appropriate absence targets on an annual basis (see Appendix 1).
- Play an active role in ensuring targets are met by monitoring attendance data on a termly basis.

## Appendix 1 – Attendance Codes

All pupils must be given a registration mark each day. There are two sessions that require a registration mark. Registration will be taken by class teachers at 8.50am (morning registration) and at 1.10pm (afternoon registration).

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
<b>/</b>	Present (AM)	Present
<b>\</b>	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>F</b>	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised leave of absence (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to students	Not counted in possible attendances

## Appendix 2 – Application for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances

Please read the guidance overleaf carefully before completing this form.

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

**Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. *There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.* The Headteacher is also required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.**

Please complete and submit this form **2 weeks in advance** if you want the Headteacher to consider your request for your child's leave of absence for **exceptional** circumstances. We may ask for proof to back up your request.

### **Unauthorised absence of 5 days or more may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice.**

Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority in accordance with Surrey County Council's Code of Conduct. The Penalty Notice is £60, per child per parent/carer, if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in you being served a summons to appear at the Magistrates Court.

The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the request carefully and will notify you of the decision.

For further information, please refer to our school Attendance Policy, which can be found on the school website.

<b>Name of child:</b>	<b>Class:</b>
I am applying for leave of absence for my child	
from:	to:
Number of school days:	
<b>Please attach a letter explaining the exceptional circumstances for which leave is requested.</b>	
Has your child already had leave of absence in this school year? YES / NO	
If YES, please give dates and details:	
I also have children at the following school(s):	
Signed: (Parent/Carer)	Date:

<b>To be completed by the Headteacher</b>		
Child's attendance level over the last 12 months:		%
Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:		
Approved		The absence will be recorded as authorised.
Not approved		The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
Explanatory notes:		
Signed: (Headteacher)		Date: